

# **Awarding for Qualifications Summer 2020**

## **Estimated Grades and Rank Ordering of Students**

### **Interim Guidance**

NEU has received many queries in relation to the provision of estimated **grades** and **rank-ordering** of students for the summer examinations/ qualifications 2020.

NEU have made detailed submissions to OFQUAL, DE, CCEA and others.

Broadly, we have welcomed the exercise of teachers' professional judgement in providing grades, but have serious reservations about the compulsory ranking proposed, and have sought more detail on statistical methodologies.

If you are interested in viewing NEU's submissions, please contact:

[mark.langhammer@neu.org.uk](mailto:mark.langhammer@neu.org.uk)

Please note that, at a meeting with teachers' unions of 7<sup>th</sup> April, CCEA committed to detailed and explicit advice on Grading, Ranking and methodologies – which has yet to be received. Pending the receipt of CCEA's detailed advice and guidance, we are issuing this general **interim** guidance.

## **General Guidance from NEU**

CCEA have provided information relating to the awarding of grades during the COVID-19 Pandemic Northern Ireland operates an open qualifications 'market', so members should also refer to guidance and instruction from awarding bodies in England and Wales where appropriate.

NEU members should also be aware of guidance from OFQUAL and remain cognisant of pre-existing JCQ regulations relating to examinations, including guidance on avoiding malpractice, throughout.

NEU members are reminded that the grades they estimate should be based on their professional judgement, derived from the best evidence available to them and agreed across the relevant department/ subject area in school.

As NEU indicated in our response to OFQUAL:

*"The NEU believes that exams are not necessarily the most accurate way to determine the achievement of a student in a given discipline, and particularly terminal exams being used to determine a student's grade entirely. However for the sake of the best possible consistency and fairness between year groups given the situation we are in, we are in favour of the proposal to ask teachers to submit the grade they think the student would have realistically achieved had exams taken place. We very much support the idea that this decision is made holistically as education professionals are best placed to know their students and judge their performance on different tasks accordingly".*

- Centre assessment grades should be based on a holistic professional judgement, balancing the different sources of evidence, such as performance in examination modules, controlled assessment, school examinations or departmental tracking assignments.
- No subject teacher or head of department should feel under pressure to change estimated grades that they have made on the basis of their professional judgement.
- Subject teachers, in collaboration with their Heads of Department, must consider each student's performance. Their assessment should only be drawn from the existing records and available evidence. It is important that the judgements are objective, and they should only take account of the evidence about student performance.
- NEU members who feel that they are being placed under any pressure to adjust assessments in a way which could lead to accusations of malpractice should contact the NEU Belfast Office for advice at [ni@neu.org.uk](mailto:ni@neu.org.uk)
- The consequences to teachers of malpractice remain the same as in previous years.
- NEU members should comply with the explicit guidance of examination boards. Heads of Department should keep accurate notes of meetings held to determine or moderate grades. The teacher or Head of Department (one or other) should be responsible for brief notes and reasoning behind the determination of grades.

- Save and retain your written records of interactions undertaken in relation to the provision of estimated grades and rank ordering and retain records of this in addition to any work, any written reasoning and any annotated work or notes made in reaching a centre assessment grade for each student.
- NEU members could seek the following support:
  - A reasonable timeframe to complete the task, based on the final deadline date of 29<sup>th</sup> May;
  - Analysis of grades over last three years could be provided to Heads of Department by ancillary staff, rather than generated by them;
  - Administrative support should be provided to teachers in respect of data-supply.

### **Workload and COVID-19 Safety Issues:**

- The requirement to 'rank order' students may lead to significant difficulties and will require significant time for teachers and Heads of Department to complete. This will have an impact on the time available to those members required to deliver remote, distance and online learning opportunities and this should be recognised by centres.
- To comply with the rank ordering request, teachers within a subject department will need to discuss the rank order and come to a shared view of the standard being applied within their centre. This can be completed using internet

'meeting' programmes such as ZOOM, Lifesize or Microsoft Teams. Any associated online meetings, phone calls, emails etc should be focussed and to the point.

- The deadline for the submission of data is no earlier than the 29th May 2020. **As such, we recommend that 'rank ordering' should not be undertaken in advance of the detailed CCEA guidance.** Adequate time should be allowed to enable teachers to meet this deadline and take place during normal contact time.
- Where possible all communication, retrieval and sharing of information should be done digitally. Schools and individuals should act within the current HSC PHA guidance at all times. For avoidance of doubt, this advice is to "Stay at Home."
- Where it is absolutely essential that a member must go to a school, NEU's expectation is that the school should conduct and share a risk-assessment with affected members. Only necessary journeys should be undertaken to retrieve evidence which is judged vital to the production of a fair estimated grade and ranking position. Social distancing must be observed, time spent in school kept to a minimum and face to face meetings should not take place.
- CCEA in their current published guidance have added that gathering this information must not require centres to contravene public health instructions.

- It may be possible for information uploaded on internal ICT systems, VLEs SIMS etc to be accessed for the purpose of digital distribution for teachers and Heads of Department, by senior staff and/ or examinations officers, therefore respecting the relevant GDPR policies. This would limit the need for other staff to travel to retrieve information where such information is not already accessible from home.
- CCEA Head of Centre guidance is clear that no further pieces of work, mock exams and so on should be completed by students for the purpose of estimating grades and rank ordering.